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Hexandria

By Alice Weldon Wasserbach

(Alice W. Darton)

The Cause of It

The Professor's Skylarking

Death's Young

An Easter King

A Quiver of Arrows

Rica's Eyes



ALICE WELDON WASSERBACH.

Alexandria.

WRITTEN IN THE FOND HOPE
OF PLEASING MY DEAR MOTHER
WHO HAS EVER BEEN THE SPUR
OF MY PEN.

By Alice Weldon (Wasserbach) Barton

THE CAUSE OF IT.

- I. A DIVINITY IN GREEN.
- II. A DIVINITY IN BLACK.
- III. A DIVINITY IN RED.
- IV. A DIVINITY IN WHITE.

THE PROFESSOR'S SKYLARKING.
DEATH'S YOUNG.
AN EASTER KING.
A QUIVER OF ARROWS.
RICA'S EYES.

1894.

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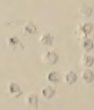
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gift
Mrs. N. A. Darton
May 1/28



The "Personal" Word.

THIS LITTLE volume, written in many moods, is sent into the world of letters with a spirit of hope and a counterbalancing one of fear: Hope, that the intention made be detected even thro' the cold medium of the printer's ink ; Fear, that the advent of a few tales from the stub pen of a schoolgirl half way thro' her teens may be received with cold, uncomprehending stares, and that the hopes may be stoned to death with the harsh words of unsympathizing critics.

The title selected, after much contemplation, is an expression of that spirit of hope. Hexandria, in botanists' vocabulary, is the name of that class of flowers which has six stamens. With a bit of imagination, I have fancied this first book of mine the flower, and the six tales, the stamens to scatter seeds, as their floral counterparts do. Although this fancy may require too much imagination to render it appropriate, it has pleased me to have my book published in this way, to see it springing up like a blossom in the springtime of the year.

Can not each reader find a few grains of indulgence to cast into hope's side of the scales of merit and demerit?

ALICE WELDON WASSERBACH.

WASHINGTON, D. C.

In Changefulness of Mood.

Morn.

I.

Beneath the magic of the morning's smiles,
With blushes rosy 'neath the sun's first peep,
I see the ocean with its tender wiles,
Half drowsy, heavy-lidded from its sleep,
Unto my lattice with shy touches creep.

II.

As though 'twere caught in some coquettish play
It dimples, blushes, sways as if to flee
Into its first timidity and stay away,
And then, from curtains drawn, I see
The laughing water coming on to me.

III.

How soft it fondles the impressive sands,
And nods beneath its rows of nightcaps white.
How merrily it tosses shells, with hands
Caressing while they cast their burdens light
Upon the beach amid the splendor bright.

IV.

Fair sea, in gentleness of voice and touch,
With mischief-seeking hands as maiden fair,
Thy tenderness of beauty, ah, is such
That I seem caught as by a ~~maiden's~~ *mermaid's* hair
And watch you while you play with conches there.

Noon.

I.

In tempestness of mood beneath the ray
Of brilliant sun, that hangs so calm o'erhead,
My sprightly comrades of the dawn of day
Begin to churn in fury, as long fed
With carcasses, yet longing for more dead.

II.

It tosses recklessly and seems to think
That bounding sands contemptuous silence hold,
And are, 'twixt life and men, the only link
That may yet save men from the tyrant bold,
Who tosses, beats and casts them in the cold.

III.

The throbbing of the mighty heart of waves
Shakes deep the tyrant bosom of the sea,
As though it knows that what it gently laves
At dawntime, it, with energy so free,
May capture and hold to its heart with glee.

IV.

Oh, giant terrible, thy frowns so deep,
Brings sorrow to a heart that loves thee so—
Loves thee in moods of anger or of sleep,
That when thy winds' sad *miserere* blow,
I weep with thee, believing in thy woe.

Eventide.

I.

A loving follower, the silver moon
Steals softly after day's great beacon life,
Its face grows bright with dreamy smiles, and soon
A beam so soft-illumining, so bright,
Slips through a rift within the veil of night.

II.

And o'er the gentle, murm'ring, drowsy sea
There spreads a softly, soothing, mellow glow,
And in this beam of light whence shadows flee,
As babies, dreaming, smile, there slowly flow
A myriad of dimples, bright and low.

III.

With rippling rhythmic lullaby as waves,
Half wakened by the moon's caressing beam,
Go tumbling sleepily into some caves,
And thro' half open eyelets send a gleam
Of brilliancy let forth as from a dream.

IV.

Oh sea, as in thy sweet dream-dimpled light,
You drowse and doze beneath the moon's soft stare,
Close to thy great heart soothed by touch of night,
Oh sea, so restful, strong, let me hide there
The sorrows of my heart now aching bare.

The Cause of It.

I.

A DIVINITY IN GREEN.

ALWAYS after supper the most delightful feeling permeated every pore of Phillip's mind and body. There was an indefinable essence in the taste and steam of the warm rolls that appealed to his senses and, after appealing, soothed them into a state of delicious semi-consciousness. When he felt this tender feeling steal over him it was his custom to take a cigar and stroll along by the murmuring sea—a peculiar mixture of practical and æsthetic enjoyment.

This was the mood that possessed Phillip Exter one evening in late June; but he had so far deviated from his usual course as to stroll upon the boardwalk instead of on the sea shore. A breastwork of sand shielded the cottages from the water; over this Phillip could just see the waves breaking in the white moonlight that is so well known at Virginia Beach. He was passing the many pretty cottages that line the promenade, now and then breaking into an introspective whistle, between the puffs of his cigar, and all the while gazing upon the boards of the walk with thoughtful attention.

In the repeatal of a particularly difficult bar, he broke off suddenly as a green-robed figure presented

itself like a vision before him. By the light from the mellow moon he could see that this figure's hands were clasped imploringly before her; that the bright hair was waving agitatedly about her face; that she was pretty. He could notice no more, for his attention was attracted to her voice, a childishly sweet one, just now full of sobs and entreaty.

"Oh, sir, pardon me!" she exclaimed, "but can't you help me? I live in that cottage there, and I'm all alone this evening, and I've heard such horrible noises." Her voice broke suddenly from fright and loss of breath.

"Of course I will help you," answered Phillip, promptly, that delightfully semi-conscious feeling immediately taking wings. "Shall I come and see?"

"If you only would," said the imploring vision; "I would not dare go in alone." Then, as they turned into the path that led to the grey-gabled house she had pointed to, she explained the situation.

"My mother and aunt are spending the evening up the beach, and I had a book to read and would not go with them. Then, as luck would have it, both the maids had callers, and when they begged to walk on the beach I could not refuse. And after that I heard the noises upstairs, and I was frightened half to death." Again she paused in an excited little way and drew closer to big, manly Phil. And he, in a big, manly way, said reassuringly:

“Oh, you needn’t be afraid *now*. I was prominent on all football teams at college, so no burglar would venture near *me*.”

At which big, manly remark the girl threw a grateful, half-smiling glance from eyes so dark that Phil’s face grew furiously warmer from that one gaze. And then she pushed open the heavy door and led Phil fearfully into a hall with wide old staircase, and doors showing glimpses of the oak-finished, book filled library, the handsome parlor, the substantial dining room and a dainty room full of divans and couches and cushions.

The girl stood at the foot of the stairs, leaning against the post with its antique figure upholding the lamp, and put a finger across her lips. Phil, man-like, paid more attention to the quaint, slender figure than to the expected sounds. Presently she turned to him.

“I can’t hear anything now,” she said; “but would you mind going upstairs and looking about?”

“No, indeed,” said the sly fellow, “only you must come with me that we may leave him some loophole of escape.”

“Not that so much,” she laughed, “as that I myself need protection.”

“Ah, but perhaps my political beliefs do not sanction protection.”

“Then I must find myself another guardian. But you are very unkind to liken me to any goods imported.”

Phil had it at his tongue's tip to say he was referring to the sugar question, but he refrained and only laughed instead. So up the stairs they went, he first with a small lamp; she following, with eyes shining more brightly in her fear. In this order they went the rounds until they came to a door entering one of the ocean rooms.

"This is my room," said the girl, "and I am very much afraid he is in here. There is a little balcony on the side and he could enter in that way."

Phil opened the door rather cautiously, it must be confessed, and stepped into the room. There was no one there! The girl followed timidly. There was so much drapery in the room that a man could easily conceal himself. While she was peeping behind it Phil gazed with an artist's eye around the room. It was a room worthy a sea-nymph, everything being draped in green crepe paper, all of an exquisite shade. The dressing-case was shadowed by it; the small brass bedstead was overhung with it; the pictures, the writing desk, the table were festooned with green and olive and alive with flowers of the paper. It was the daintiest room he had ever seen or imagined, and seemed a fit setting for the girl who occupied it. She at length finished her search and came to him.

"I have looked everywhere except on the balcony; I am hardly brave enough for that," she announced.

Phil stepped to the crepe-hidden window and

pushed aside the portiere, and immediately something brushed past him, and the girl gave a little scream.

"Why, Polonius," she cried. And Phillip, turning, saw a great black cat cowering down at the feet, the pretty small feet, of its amazed mistress. She looked up at the young man who still held back the curtain.

"I am so sorry," she said, with a deep blush tinged her cheeks. "How could I have been so stupid? I have given you so much trouble," contritely.

"Not at all," said Phillip, heartily; "it has been an adventure I have enjoyed." His eyes were very audacious in what they said to this girl whom he had never seen before. He recognized this when the blush deepened on her face; turning his speaking eyes away, he moved toward the door, asking with a little laugh:

"Do you think we need search further?"

"I am ashamed to confess that Polonius is the mischief-maker; he doubtless closed the door, he is so strong."

Then they went down into the moonlit hall together, and stood for a moment in the wide doorway.

"I do not like to leave you alone now, although the cat did make the mischief. Had I not better call the maid?"

"I think" she said, rather shyly, "if you have no objection that I will go with you. Altho' the im-

pression was unfounded, it still lingers with me, and I do not like to be alone."

"Objection?" He did not answer her question further; his intonation was quite enough. So together they went down to the moon-bathed sea, in silence. When they came in sight of the waves, Phillip spoke.

"I am rather late in doing so," he said, "but I had better introduce myself to you. My name is Phillip Exter, and ours is the brown cottage a little further up the beach."

"And I," said the girl, "am Wynifred Dale Richmond, generally called Dale, and generally considered a very timid personage indeed—except where the water is concerned. There, I am invincible." As tho' it heard and mocked her boast, a great wave broke close to shore and she was forced to retreat from the advancing water.

"There," repeated Phil, with emphasis, "you are invincible."

"Well," she answered, laughing, "I am invincible, but not when I have mere house slippers on."

At this moment two couples, each member in interesting proximity to the other member, came into view, and stopped in surprise before the girl and the man. They were the two maids and their callers. When they had been directed homeward, Miss Richmond and Phillip returned to the board walk in front of her cottage.

"You must blame the Fates for spoiling your

evening's walk," she said, as she gave him her hand in parting. She had thanked him very prettily for his courtesy.

"Blame them!" he echoed. "Rather render them endless praise and thanksgiving." With this remark, half in fun, wholly in earnest, he walked away. But now, in place of the introspection, he gave his memory up to picturing her face and artless little ways.

It was on the next morning that Phil again saw the maiden of the romantic adventure. Before the morning german, he found himself bowing and flushing before Miss Richmond. He had opportunity between the sets of studying her features and movements.

He discerned immediately that she was different from the other girls in manner and dress. Although she wore a simple summer dress, there was an originality in the flounces, the laces, the ribbons that could belong to Dale Richmond alone. Her hair, of a rich yellow hue, was parted in the middle and fell in loose curls from her face to the dainty psyche knot. She wore a curious little affair of velvet, like a crown, which encircled her head and divided the hair in front, and this, together with the delicacy of features, exquisiteness of coloring and piquant expression, made the face attractive and not easily forgotten.

Phillip was inexpressibly charmed with her, and, when he had pushed his acquaintance with her to

the boundary line of friendship, and had expended all the charms of his conversation—and they were not few—upon her, he found she possessed a mind as interesting, piquant and soulful as her very interesting, very piquant and very soulful face.

As the summer advanced, he and she grew more firm in friendship for one another. They used to go in with the crowd of gay bathers every afternoon at five, and he, diving in with rare enjoyment after her, would find the shrill screams of the ladies still ankle-deep in water coming to him thro' the green depths.

She seemed a veritable sea-nymph in her green bathing suit, that suited her as everything she wore did. It was of a delicate sea-green, with a deeper, darker splash about the hem; with it, she wore a jaunty little green cap with a faintly pink shell, fastened at the side with womanly ingenuity. She had a decided charm in the water that drew him closer to her. She had a cute way of diving under the waves and then, rising to the top, and shaking her head in a way that made her hair fly from her pink face in little tender yellow curls.

What wonder then if the mighty heart of waves inspired their young hearts; what wonder if, meeting the waves, as twin atoms in that mighty mass of atoms, their hearts beat more fervidly and their fresh blood flowed on toward that endless reef-ful sea of human love.

II.

A DIVINITY IN BLACK.

IN CLAM-BAKES, in oyster parties at Lynnhaven Bay, in straw rides to Cape Henry, in sailing clubs to Cape Charles, in bathing sallies, in pedestrian excursions sped that summer away, until the day came that was the "Finis" to Dale Richmond's visit to Virginia Beach. Exter, with sorrow as to the cause, and rejoicing that his lagging courage would be pushed to the pleasant but difficult task, felt that now the moment had come when he must lay his hopes for his life at Miss Dale's dainty feet.

When the delightful feeling that had made part of the Phillip Exter into whose life Dale had come on that June evening permeated him, he sallied forth, treading again the boards of the old promenade in the same introspective mood, and gazed into the mellow depths of the moon with the same hopeful spirit. Again he saw before him the green-robed vision that always now made his heart beat so warmly. Standing at the gate of the little garden she was gazing with dreaming eyes upon the sea. He seemed to startle her when he approached and yet not exactly unpleasantly. "Isn't the sea perfect to-night?" she said, lifting eyes that reflected the moon's splendor and seemed to glow with the phosphorus that was now flooding the sea. "It is perfect to-night in honor of you," he said; "it will not see you again until next year, and it has decked itself out like a vain but

loving woman. Let us go down to the beach and watch the glow."

If her eyes had not been clouded with dreams she would have known what it was he intended to say to her, but she thought only of the ocean—the beautiful water. She went close to the water's edge, and as each new wave would break in white, white foam, she would fill her hands with water and let the rich phosphorus-gleaming liquid run through her fingers.

While they stood by the water thus, that same old strong, black cat, Polonius, came rubbing against her dress. He had followed his fond mistress to the sand. Dale took the great, heavy thing into her arms, and petting it, lost sight of the waves and the dreams. So when Phillip, leaning over her in a strong, eager way, started to speak what his eyes in an instant told her, she was frightened, and yet, ingenious she laid the rough-furred Polonius in his arms, and said he was too heavy for her to hold.

But Phillip grasping the cat could not open his lips to say those words. Dale drew him in haste toward the cottage, but just before they mounted the bulwark of sand, Phil threw the cat away violently. And then he spoke to her in intense words, with intense face. But she thinking only of her crying cat, with the tenderness of her spirit for her pet, and not for him with the open love in his face, and not for herself with the unseen budding love in her heart, answered hastily. She was sorry; he would forgive her; she was only fond of him. And then

she ran lightly away after her meowing cat, and left him alone there by the droning, sleepy, phosphorescent sea. The next morning Dale received a little note from him, bidding her good-by, and saying he was gone before this was received, on the earliest train into Norfolk. It was a queer little note, giving a tightening sensation to her throat, but even then she did not know what This meant.

When the Norfolk, Albemarle and Atlantic train steamed out from behind the lovely hotel, after she had caught a last glimpse of the green Atlantic, it was only regret for the ocean, the pleasure, the companion, that she felt, not for the haunts that recalled a lover.

In the life that she entered in on her return to that up-Hudson town, she had but little thought of Phillip Exter. For the change from the exuberant air of Virginia Beach, with its ocean and pine forest in such close proximity, to the northern air had acted depressingly on her aunt's health. She had been delicate of late, and had shown a tendency to consumption. So when the Southern roses faded from her cheeks and that troublesome cough began to rack her slender frame, Mrs. Richmond and Dale betrayed much anxiety.

Anxiety as it proved was justly the order of the day, for the gentle old lady sank into confirmed invalidism which advanced rapidly into a dangerous state.

In Dale's character now grew up a womanly

sweetness and patience that seemed to grow more womanly, and more sweet as the days crept by that bore the invalid to the grave. She had but little time for thought of Phillip and those happy days at the Beach, but devoted all thoughts and attention to her aunt. Thus was that gentle lady's life cheered on to the end which came one late afternoon in September, the darkness of death falling with the darkness of night. On the morning of the funeral Dale was summoned into the library and there met Phillip Exter; the friend of summer-time, of glorious days and ideal nights, had come to her in her hour of sorrow.

She read in his eyes all that was in his heart, but at this time when the dear aunt lay dead in the parlor beyond, it seemed sacrilege to speak of his worldly happiness and hers. And so she repulsed his advances, and he in these repulses read a coldness in her heart that he could never thaw. During the services at the church, when Dale's whole heart seemed desolated by the loss of her aunt, he was a great comfort, with his delicate attentions and sympathy. But when Phillip Exter took leave of this black-robed girl who was so gentle and sweet and withal so calmly cold, he had put aside those summer dreams of his and determined to sternly face the winter of the hardships and strong winds of life.

After about a month spent in that Northern town, Dale, the womanly, black-robed divinity that he was pressing into a secret corner of his heart, left her

home and went, he knew not whither. With stifling his pain, new lines came into his face; with ever seeing and yet not wishing to see her form, his eyes grew darker and deeper and sadder; with always longing for her his life seemed full of discontent.

III.

A DIVINITY IN RED.

WHEN THE first touches of spring began to illumine the Capital City with the bright leaves of trees and fill the air with the balminess and bird trillings of growing life, Dale Richmond and her mother, after an extended tour through the West, came to Washington. They rented a house on New Hampshire avenue near Dupont Circle, and Dale tried to forget herself in household pleasures. For, of late—since, in fact, they had broken the ties with home—she had found herself thinking more and more of her seaside lover, until now she confessed to herself that it had been more than mere friendliness that she had felt for him. But these thoughts she tried to stifle as he had tried before her.

And so the days passed onward and Mrs. Richmond, Dale, and Polonius, the cat, began to like their new life. They had been discussing it one evening—the difference between the old life and the new—when the silver chimes of the library clock announced the hour of eleven. After that conversa-

tion, Dale retired to her room with her thoughts playing truant in the summer-time before her aunt had died.

It was from a dream of those happy, happy days that she was awakened by Polonius. The cat had jumped upon the bed and was crying loudly in her fond mistress' ear. She, half sleepily, pressed her hand against the rough fur, but the feline continued its unmusical cries.

Dale at last sat up in bed in impatience, then, her mood changing, she jumped quickly from bed and lighted the gas. She started back in affright; the flame seemed misty and far away, it was overhung by clouds of smoke! She rushed into the hall, but the smoke drove her back. A flame was creeping up the stairway; there was no loophole of escape in that direction.

"Mother! Mother! Mother!" screamed the girl, in an agony of fear. Again the smoke drove her back into her room. Closing the door, she ran to the windows and opened them, breathing in the fresh air with a grateful, terrified sob. To her ears the night seemed broken by the frantic scream of "fire," which burst from the lower floors. The servants, who all slept below, were arousing the neighborhood with their cries.

Soon the calmer tones of the fire bells tolled out upon the midnight air, and the clanging of the engine bells came nearer. Dale called again and again, but receiving no reply, she returned to the door. There,

the flames, crackling and snapping, and seeming full of eyes that laughed while they gleamed, were approaching the heavy draperies over the doorway, banishing all thoughts of escape by the staircase from her terrified mind.

She had almost determined to leap from the window, when a thought like an inspiration of her guardian angel, flashed into her brain. The ladder, with the aid of which several pictures had that day been hung in her room, was still there. By it she might hope to reach the roof. Excitement lent strength to the slender hands, and enabled her to place it against the framework of the entrance to the low attic. Then she began the ascent, a difficult ascent, with the sharp rounds of the ladder hurting her feet.

She heard the hissing crackling of the flames; she pushed onward till she reached the top; she raised the cover and was soon in the attic. The trap door above was fastened by a bolt. She pulled with all her young strength; it did not move.

Filled with despair she descended and stood there in the gathering smoke with her hands clasped.

* * * * *

Mrs. Richmond had been awakened by Dale's piercing cries, and, terribly alarmed, she immediately comprehended the situation. The thought of the flames could not deter her; danger could not prevent her attempt to join her daughter; but the smoke, creeping stealthily into her lungs, overpowered her, and the servants rushed shrieking to the hall, from

the rear of the house, in time to bear her into her room.

Opening the windows they shouted for help until the fire department, notified by a neighbor, came tearing up the streets. Even then they were in danger, for their cries were drowned by the noise. Against the background of lurid lights, however, they were in sharp relief and were spied by one of the brave men. Then the gallant men of Company B bore the insensible form of Mrs. Richmond from the room. A moment afterward it was in flames, and in the room above there stood that white, still figure with the folded hands.

At length Dale crossed to the window, but the smoke was coming in volumes from the room below and she could neither see nor be seen. Relinquishing all hope of escape, she sank upon her knees beside a little table; and in doing so, her hand came in contact with a silver button-hook which lay on her jewel case. Taking both, and Polonius—who at this moment, rubbed its fur against her feet—she again mounted the ladder.

“It is my only hope of life,” was her unspoken thought. Placing the hook over the knob of the bolt, she pulled with all her strength. Again and again with no effect. The room was full of smoke, the door seemed but of paper, so thin had the heat made it. The girl was feverish with excitement and terror, the thought of such a death was appalling; the smoke was already affecting her.

As a last effort she summoned all her will power to aid her departing strength ; a last final pull and the bolt had slipped back. She raised the trap door, and in rushed the cool night air, lending its strength to the exhausted girl. She crawled feebly to the roof ; the tin seams hurt her tender feet, the air—the balmy air of spring—was frigid after the heat of the oven within. She hurried onward ; ever before her was the danger of her mother and herself—the possibility of the roof's catching fire. She ran almost blindly forward, when suddenly she missed her footing and fell ; and the clanging of the bells and the roar of the flames and the meowing of the cat, deepened into the droning of a phosphorescent sea.

Seventy feet above the earth, above its noise and din, a burning house with the flames even now bursting through the roof, the night winds blowing with their never ceasing murmur—a girl, dreaming of the Atlantic, lay there, hands outstretched as she had fallen. The low sighing moan of the wind filled her ears and drummed into consciousness the drowsing brain. The fiery tongues of flame that Neptune had not quenched brought all recollection back and with a sob, Dale attempted to rise. Her hand came in contact with the elevation which had caused her fall. And the sob turned into a little delirious whisper of joy. It was a scuttle hole !

She knelt on the cold tin beside it, and with her slender hands beat against the wooden door. There was no response. Bethinking herself of the jewel

case, with it she pounded upon the door. Hearing no answering sound, tired petulant tears came to her eyes; when she was about despairing she heard a man's voice come up from below:

“Who under heaven is making this racket?”

And with Polonius' meowing an accompaniment, Dale sent her trembling voice in answer.

“Our house is on fire,” said she, “and I'm here on your roof.”

She listened anxiously after her explanation; then came the reply.

“If you will wait a moment, I will let you in.”

Soon she heard a ladder being brought, then steps upon it, until, as the trap was raised, a man's head appeared.

The moon's soft rays were shining calmly and clearly upon the two: Dale with her shining hair, loosened in the excitement, forming a golden screen around her shoulders, and her eyes large and dark with fear—the man with the deepest of dark eyes, and midnight hair, which clustered in curls about his broad brow.

He stared in speechless amazement at the fair vision before him; she, with tearful gladness in her voice, said, tremblingly, “Phil.”

That was all, but it was enough to make him put forth his hands and take both of hers in his. He was too surprised to speak and too shaken by the meeting. All the old love that he had thought he could hide, rushed over him and flooded his face and

eyes. Again he saw her in that attitude that was identified with their first meeting, with the same expression, startled and pleading. And it seemed to his gladdened heart that the glad look that had passed to her face when she recognized him must be a portent of good fortune.

Although he felt these things while her hands were still held in his happy clasp, all he said to her, aside from his eyes, was :

“I will arrange the ladder so you may descend.”

With that he returned to the floor below. Soon a gentle feminine voice called up to her :

“You can come down now; there is no one else here.”

Then Dale, with strength that the sight of him had given her, descended the ladder, and was met by a comely matron, who said to her :

“I am Phillip’s—Mr. Exter’s—sister, Mrs. Wallace. I sympathize with you so much. Poor child, come to my room, and I will give you a wrapper. You will freeze!” And then she affectionately led her downstairs into a handsome chamber, and slipped a warm, crimson wrapper over Dale’s chilled shoulders. When that poor maiden sank down upon the couch in a passionate burst of weeping, she was comforted and soothed in a thousand womanly ways.

As soon as she discovered that her guest’s mother was probably still in danger, she sent word to Phillip to institute a search for Mrs. Richmond. Meanwhile Mrs. Wallace coaxed Dale into a tale of the whys

and wherefores of the fire, and complimented her for her bravery—although personally directed—and ingenuity, until some of the latter's horror wore off—all except the fearful anxiety concerning her mother. Mrs. Wallace listened at the head of the stairs for the opening of the door. When she announced it, Dale ran quickly down into the hall.

"My mother?" was all she said, but Phillip recognizing the terrible anxiety in her face, immediately reassured her.

"She is safe," he said, "in a neighbor's house, but can not be disturbed even by you, as the doctor, whom they sent for, gave her a sleeping draught."

When he saw the look of fear flee from her eyes, his self-control snapped asunder, and his own hopes came bursting forth. He held his hands out to her.

"Dale," he pleaded, "is this meeting to count for nothing in our lives? Are we to keep on in our separate paths, with my love worth nothing to you; am I to go on living without you?"

And then she, with a voice that trembled with the intensity of her emotion, and eyes that glowed as with the phosphorus of the sea, answered him.

"I *do* love you," she said. "I never knew how much I loved you until now."

IV.

A DIVINITY IN WHITE.

THE SCENT of flowers, the trills of birds, the breeze of seas, the roar of waters, and above all, the sound of a priest's benediction and the low run of a bridal march, that flowed from the keys of the organ, like the murmur, the thrilling, lapsing, laughing mummur, of an ocean wave.

And afterward? Well, just the vision of a divinity in white with phosphorescent eyes, and a man with the full strong light of loving happiness on his face.

"And whom do you think I thank for all this bliss," asked the man; then answered himself, "I thank that old, black cat, Polonius!"

The Professor's Skylarking.

AS AN EXPRESSION OF PUPILARY RESPECT AND AFFECTION, THIS LITTLE
TALE IS DEDICATED TO HIM UNDER WHOSE GUIDANCE, THE WRITER
FIRST LEARNED THE LAW DEMONSTRATED THEREIN—
TO DR. WILLIAM HEDRICK, THE WELL-KNOWN, WELL-LIKED AND VERY
SCIENTIFIC PROFESSOR OF PHYSICS AT THE WASHINGTON
CENTRAL HIGH SCHOOL.

WHEN LOVE comes on even the tenacious hold of science is unwillingly loosed until the victim, without assistants, stands within easy range of more of the poisoned darts. Thus it was with the Professor. When he first fell beneath the sun-like rays of Mrs. De Viddy, he felt the thousand fingers of science gradually loosing their hold upon his mind, and leaving him unprotected before her fascinations. And to poor Professor Fysix, unversed in the ways of womankind as he was, she was a most enchanting creature.

In all the light of the wisdom of the first year of the twentieth century, he believed her a beautiful woman. He did not know that the nose which loomed forth from her roseate countenance was of the gently-tipped kind termed Irish, and he admired her but the more, because with her eyes she could see two sides of any scientific object at once. The Mrs. De Viddy was not equally oblivious of the faults of the Professor. What woman ever is, of any man's? She knew that the Professor's olfactory instrument was distinguishable by the startling ab-

ruptness of the hook, and that his complexion was a delicately sand-colored one. But with womanly wisdom she decided that too crooked and two straight eyes were better than two crooked eyes alone, especially since but half of the allotted four score years remained to her.

Consequently Professor Fysix dangled from the roseate widow's apron string for about a year. Then the Professor took a resolution such as each man has taken at some period of his life: he would propose. And after he had brought all his knowledge of the sciences to bear upon the important question, he learned by heart a declaration. Soon after this, he received a note from Mrs. De Viddy. Wouldn't the Professor delight her heart by appearing at a fancy dress ball to be given at her hotel? "Be sure to come in fancy costume!" Who can blame the Professor for accepting and who can wonder that when he went to select his costume, his knowledge of physics, astronomy and like subjects, failed him.

The poor Professor was an innocent man for all his years, and had lived so quietly before he met the widow that he was little versed in the wicked ways of the world. So, when the costumer told him, with an admiring smile, that a suit consisting chiefly of white tights and a low-cut shirtwaist would be most becoming to himself and *most* fascinating to his "lady friends," the deluded man immediately engaged it. He then retired to his laboratory until the evening should come when he would announce his desire to marry the widow.

During those days he turned his mind again to science. He wondered the first day if his love were making him insane, for he was sure, quite sure, he had passed the sun twice within the twenty-four hours. On the second day he became deeply interested, as he had passed the sun three times. He studied up the subject and spent hours over his books. Then the Professor went wild over his sciences and saw the sun more and more frequently, until, on the day of the fancy dress ball, he was firmly convinced that the earth had revolved sixty-three times within the last twenty-four hours.

He knew then that the close of his scientific life and of thousands of wasted lives was at hand. But as the evening approached he felt all his old love for Mrs. De Viddy revive, and he determined to have her rubicund self near him at the last. And so, with Spartan-like firmness, he clad himself in his tights and *decollette* shirt, and, wrapped in a long ulster, he hurried to the festive hotel. It was the first time he had been in the open air since the phenomenon had begun, and now he felt the heat of the atmosphere. The earth, in its rapid revolutions, imparted to the molecules of air an energy which generated heat. His costume was therefore well suited to the warmth of the evening, and, in addition to this, the fact of its becomingness pleased his elderly heart.

Arriving at the hotel he found the other guests assembled. "Professor Fysix," announced the man-

in-waiting. A sigh spread around the room as he entered, for the pitying multitude saw that science had not been able to perfect its devotee. The legs of the Professor were curved so that in his white tights he resembled a huge parenthesis. But he, unknowing, saluted Mrs. De Viddy's fat hand with a kiss that was as warm as that of a boy of twenty kissing his youthful sweetheart, and twice as bashful.

With Mrs. De Viddy on his old arm, he mingled with the guests and found that the phenomenon which he had noticed had attracted much attention, but that the people of this neighborhood, boasting but one professor, and that himself, did not appreciate their danger. When the Professor perceived this, he tugged gently at Mrs. De Viddy's arm and directed to her such pleading glances, that she coyly consented to walk in the garden. And then he told her his belief in the near end of the world and of them. The coy widow with her left eye saw the darkness of night in the West, but with her right she saw the sun again appearing over the eastern horizon.

Therefore she readily believed his statement and rested herself against the Professor's scientific breast, covering both sides of the linen with her tears. And thus they stood and talked until the sun disappeared far in the west. And immediately they felt a great commotion in the atmosphere, the sky grew black, and then, they felt themselves lifted high into the air and borne on as by a mighty wind.

The Professor slipped his arm around the widow's

healthy waist, and gazed with observant, altho' startled, eyes around. He saw the trees bending toward the South, and many breaking, even, with the fierceness of the strange rush. After a hasty glance at the frightened widow who was being borne on as a feather, he looked below and behind again and saw hundreds, aye, thousands, of his fellow-men following after. They were all rushing with horrible swiftness to the south. The Professor calculated that the equator would soon be reached if this marvelous speed were retained.

The widow began now to betray some interest in her surroundings. She turned her head and saw flying after them, in all costumes, men and women and children and dogs and cats and birds with wings tightly closed. It was all very queer, thought the Professor's beloved, but notwithstanding her affright, she gave a little sigh of womanly thankfulness because she and the Professor, dear man, were leading this grand multitude.

At last, far ahead of them she saw another mass of supposedly civilized and savage beings rushing with equal speed to them. Onward they came, nearer! nearer! to the point of clashing, until she almost felt the stray hairs of the be-mustached Brazilian directly opposite to her upon her cheek—then, with an instantaneous movement, they ceased. She gazed horrifiedly, inquiringly, at the Professor with her near eye.

"It is the equator," he cried, "we can go no

farther ;'' but even as he spoke, they rose directly upward with as great a speed as that with which they had come. The Professor's loose, low-cut shirt was inflated with air, and beneath it the poor bowed legs in the white tights looked painfully old and thin. As they went further from the earth, he felt it grow cooler and longed, notwithstanding the fascination which this costume possessed for ladies, that he had worn some other one. Then with lover-like affection he turned to the widow, who was still encircled by his arm.

She had worn a charming Elizabethan gown to the fancy dress ball and now presented a curious sight. The ruff was standing up as in affright about the rose-bloom face with eyes—or rather eye—that could look coquettishly at the Professor even now. Her long train was sailing beautifully behind and with the balloon-shaped skirt made a striking contrast to the extremities of her companion. Even while he gazed a sound like the shrieking of the convicted in the other world arose to their ears. They did not know that it was the whistle of a steam engine blown by the rushing wind itself; and they were accordingly terrified. The widow was in an especially harrowing state of mind; she was sure, quite sure, that they were on the direct road to Heaven, and she sobbed and prayed with a vehemence that shook the Professor.

He, learned man, knew the particular law in physics which was being demonstrated on so large a

scale, and was, even in the face of that rarefied air which they were approaching, anxious to observe all of his surroundings, probably to assist him into the other world. At last, what he had half expected occurred. The invisible force that had borne them upward, began gradually to lose some of its rapidity of motion. Little by little, little by little, it slackened until the Professor and his companion found themselves stationary above the clouds. The Professor cheered his companion, and then glanced about with those observant eyes of his.

They had been surrounded by a crowd of fellow-travelers, who betrayed much interest and amusement at the antics of this little, scantily-dressed man. For the Professor was taking great leaps into the air, for the sake of his favorite science, and seemed delighted when he discovered that he returned to his resting place just the same as tho' he had leaped from the earth's surface. A few English-speaking persons present asked him the reason of such actions. The Professor strutted about on that invisible floor of air, stating that he did these thing for the advancement of science. When called upon eagerly to account for the present occurrence, he straightened the collar of the low-cut shirt and began:

“By experiments it has been discovered that the globular shape of the earth is due to its revolutions upon its axis; now nature is practically proving our theory: that if the earth should increase its velocity we would be thrown from the earth, just as we have

been. The earth, at present," pointing downward, "is not increasing its speed, and so we, aided by the power of gravity, remain stationary here. Now if, as I think very probable, the earth should rotate less and less swiftly, gravity will attract us back again to the earth's surface."

Mrs. De Viddy here seized the Professor's arm with her face ablaze with excitement.

"Will we fall all this distance, Professor, dear?" she cried, fearfully. Besides her fear of falling, she was rather disappointed, I believe, at the thought of relinquishing the idea of bodily entering Heaven with the Professor.

"We shall fall," answered the Professor, soothingly, "but only as tho' we were sinking from this great earth to one but an inch or so beneath. And if, by chance, the real world has revolved a certain number of times, we shall sink to the very spot over the equator where we rested before, and shall thence journey homeward."

• But the honest widow was still in a flutter of excitement, and so the Professor had to calm his Queen Elizabeth. In the conversation that ensued, drowned, almost, by the many tongues and many voices of the multitude, he found an opportunity to make that declaration that he had studied so zealously to acquire. What matter if it was filled with physics and astrology and astronomy, or if it was a trifle stiff? In love everybody raves over the heavenly bodies; besides, what woman ever scorns a

sign that she is the only woman that a man has loved? The red of the worthy widow's cheeks was further enkindled, when, forgetting the hooked nose, the sandy complexion, and all else save his virtues, she gave herself to him.

And he, while kissing her fat cheeks, found her more beautiful than ever, for the blue air between his eyes and hers counteracted the effect of the healthful blood in her countenance.

At this interesting moment the foolish pair felt a slight shock, a pull at their feet, and found themselves surely, surely sinking. The widow, with her greater amount of flesh and blood, was torn from the arms of her devoted Professor, and fell more rapidly than he. But as she passed his feet her outstretched hands caught his slippers with the long, fantastic, turned-up toes, and she held them in her eager grasp. Thus the honest dame assisted Professor Fysix in his downward flight. He leaned over, the little Professor, with his bowed legs in the white tights which looked bluish white in the blue air, and the inflated *decollette* shirt, and spoke tenderly to the woman floating down beneath him.

They passed on through the clouds out into the depths of warm air below. The sun that had been passed by the earth so many times smiled on them familiarly and seemed amused at the trip they had taken into the realms that owned him sovereign. The Professor, with his eyes incited by what he knew was happening, imagined that he could see the

decrease in the earth's movement. He saw the earth arching beneath him as the sky arched above, and a feeling of joy came over him as he saw the green globe beneath.

He calculated the moment when they would begin to depart on their lateral journey. Mrs. De Viddy's motion ceased for an instant, and in that instant Professor Physix reached her. Then they went northward, still flying swiftly through the air. The Professor assumed his usual proportions; Mrs. De Viddy's ruff settled itself, and they both drew together like two cooing doves.

Occasionally a neighbor from the accompanying throng would salute them, but they soon became oblivious of everything save their love. They were in this stage when they arrived at the town—at the hotel where Mrs. De Viddy lived, and they were affectionately entangled when they settled down upon the very spot in the very garden where they had stood on that last night on earth.

And as they stood there facing each other, he, with his thin, bowed old legs and hooked nose, she, with her double sight and rubicund countenance, they sighed.

“What a glorious journey,” said the widow.

“It shall be our wedding journey,” answered the Professor.

Death's Young.

SUGGESTED BY THE DEATH AND WORTHILY BEAUTIFUL FUNERAL OF MR.
FRANK HATTON, THE PATRON OF LETTERS, THE EDITOR OF
THE WASHINGTON POST, THE REGRETTED MAN.

IT WAS during the early spring that their friendship began. He, striding easily down the shady street, saw the little figure coming toward him, the tiny finger in the rosy mouth and the eyes full of tears.

"Why, what is the matter, little one?" he asked, when they met. She looked at him tearfully a moment and then took the small finger lingeringly from her mouth. There was a short scratch on it with the red blood welling up.

"My little kitten," she said, and with the bright tears rolling down her cheeks, "I loved it so." He took the little form up in his arms, and striding on down the street, came to his own house. He passed in thro' the dark rooms, out to a side veranda. There he put her down.

"Now, I will make it all well," he said, and took a small package of court plaster from his pocket. She watched him intently while he laid the small piece on her finger. When he had "kissed it to make it well" she was sure, quite sure, it had already healed, and was quite ready to forgive kattie and love him.

"What is your name?" he asked, when he had placed her on the railing and was holding her there with one arm.

"Phyllis," she said; "what's yours?"

"Raymond," he answered.

"What a pretty name," she said, and put her small hand on the dark head near, caressingly.

That was the way their friendship began, a friendship that soon grew into both of their lives. She was such a sweet, sympathetic child and so oddly wise for her seven years. He, to her, embodied the most beautiful of what was grown, and the most companionable, for soon the difference between his eighteen years and her seven sank into insignificance. She used to come to him every afternoon after his school and they would go out into the fields together, and would lie and talk for hours beneath the trees. For she unconsciously strived to grow old in her talk with him, while he, joining in with her innocent thoughts and ideas, went back again into his childhood.

He would have been very desolate at this time except for her. Mrs. Sorrel had felt the coming heat too much to remain in the city, and she had gone in the Northern mountains. Her boy was thus left alone in their large house, but his studies and little Phyllis kept him from feeling too much the gloom of the place.

He had always been a rather melancholy boy, especially since his father had died, four years ago.

The elder Raymond had been a physician, and his son, being intended for the same profession, had seen much of the suffering of life, but this, while it early enabled him to serve the sick, had brought thoughts into the boy's mind foreign to healthy youth. He began to think much about the death of which he saw so much, the death that is a climax to tragedy, the death that is tragedy itself, and the death that is a relief. As he grew older, and when he was the "man of the house," he looked upon death in the latter light. Not that he was sullen and morose, but his nature seemed to be one of sadness. He appreciated all the beauty of the earth and the freshness of the summer air, but it was the appreciation of one without it all, of one for whom the beautiful earth had not been made, for whom the air was not made warm and fresh and inspiring. He was the most comforting of deathbed assistants, for with his own willingness to die he could inspire others, so that the parting from this life was not so terrible and heartrending as if this boy had not been near. Even now, early in life as he was, his friend-physicians, and, sometimes, the professors in his medical college, found him a help at those moments.

Little Phyllis, with a child's intuition, felt the sweet sadness of his nature and almost unconsciously became more subdued herself. Sometimes she would draw him into a little game of her own, but when she saw his hands fall idly, she would come and sit beside him and they would talk soberly for

young hearts. Oftentimes the subject would be death; and she, who did not know what death was, came to believe in it as he did. He did not know that he was changing the child's nature, but in her anxious questioning he would so often find food for thought, that he loved to linger there with her and think again on the great problem. It had long since grown to be the one thought of his life, this death that others dreaded, but which he loved; it was not to him the heart-cold man, with scythe ready for young and old, but the kind, grey-haired father who lays his hand upon the hearts with their worldly thoughts and troubles, and changes all the aching longing to one endless peace. There beneath the trees, with birds and flowers and all happy life around, they discussed death, those two in the very springtime of their lives looking forth to the shadow.

"But, Ray," began Phyllis, one day, with her little hand on an early-fading flower, "see, the flowers die, and they are not unhappy."

"Death teaches us a lesson here, he answered, plucking a daisy for illustration. "This little daisy lives in the midst of the beauties of nature, with the grass around, and the birds and the trees and the heavens above, yet these will die when winter comes. And other daisies as white and gold as this next year spring up to fill its place, and brighten lives of other human beings as this has brightened ours. Do you see the lesson for us, little one? This flower that has done no harm, that has only lived to

bloom in others' lives—in our lives—dies and dies willingly. Why, then, shouldn't we who live for ourselves alone, and who live sinningly—why shouldn't we die, and willingly?"

"Is everybody so dreadfully wicked, Ray?" with a sorrowful expression on the fair little face. "You are so good, as good as they tell me to be in Sunday school."

The boy smiled at the childlike compliment, and then went on seriously: "'The world is not all wicked, dear; there are many, many good people here, but, compared with the flower, we are all displeasing to God. And since God takes the life of the flower, why should we consider death a punishment and a punishment to be dreaded? Why, death is the greatest of God's gifts; when you reflect how we sin, and what faults we are developing and what wickedness we are storing up against our souls' salvation, each extra day that we live, we should rather welcome death.'"

The little girl sat silently beside him. Young as she was she understood these things that he was saying, and felt each word vibrate within her. They both loved death and this same love proved another bond of sympathy. At last he rose up. "Let us go now, Phyllis," and as she sprang up and slipped her hand within his, and he saw the fresh, healthful beauty of her face, he stooped to her and said, "I do not want you to long for death, little sweetheart, but you must live so it may never find you unready

for it." And the child answered, "Yes," and it sounded like a promise. After that Phyllis thought even more of death, and with that promise in view resisted every little temptation that came into her life. Thus Raymond Sorrel, while saddening the young nature, raised and strengthened it beyond its years.

A few days after this conversation, Phyllis saw Raymond walking rapidly down the street, with the sad expression that the child had learned to know so well. She tapped on the window to him, and then not satisfied with the smile he gave her, she ran downstairs to speak to him. When she came out into the street he had passed the house, but she ran after him, and slipping her hand into his, called his name. He turned his face to her, and started back with horror on every feature.

"Go away, Phyllis," he cried, "you—you must not come near me." Then he backed down the street, but seeing the trembling, surprised, sorrowful expression on the child's face, he said, "You may come down, Phyllis, dear, in about an hour, and I will see you." Then he passed on down the street, walking very rapidly. The child stood looking after him with a heart-broken expression on her face, then she turned homeward. It was the first time he had ever repulsed her, and the whole tender little heart was quivering from the stroke. She wandered about the house until the hour should be up, and in that

hour she was firmly convinced for her lifetime of the relief of death.

When the hour was up, she walked slowly down the shady street, with the usual bright expression of the pretty face clouded by the pain. He came to meet her at the door and they went to the veranda where their friendship had first begun. "I did not let you come," he exclaimed, "because I have been where there is a great epidemic brooding. [He had long ago explained his frequent medical phrases to the child.] The poor people who live in the southern part of the city are having a dreadful time. Many of them are ill—very ill, with a disease that even the doctors fear. Many physicians have refused to attend them, so they are in a worse position than ever before here. I have been down there all the morning helping the poor wretches; I was afraid if you came near me you might become ill too. It is a very painful disease, but very rapid; the few doctors who are trying to check it are much afraid it will spread throughout the city."

The child spoke now for the first time, anxiety occupying the place of the pain on her face.

"Suppose you should be taken sick, Ray," she asked.

"I shall not be, little one," he answered, quietly. "It seems to me that only those poor wretches die who fear to die. I have just seen four men shrieking with terror at the thought of dying, and yet death should be to them a relief from hard, unpleas-

ing existence." The lines of sadness were again appearing in the face above her.

"If they only knew how to die," the child said, and put up her soft, white hand and smoothed the the face, with love in her eyes. Raymond seemed to awake from a trance. "I do not think it is well for you to stay, little sweetheart. You had better tell your mother about this, and see if she thinks it best for you to be near me so much now. I am not going out again to-day, so you may come to tell me early to-morrow morning. I pray God it will soon be over."

Phyllis then returned home sorrowful, but the dreadful repulse of the morning had been swept away by his kind words.

Raymond sat in his room thro' the long evening thinking. He was going to start out in the morning, so that night he pondered again over his great thought. He was rather young to see so much of death, and his nature was too serious, but the thought that made him sadder than other boys had made him sweeter. The thought was with him all that night, and in the morning he was sadder, still longing for the relief. It was still very early in the morning, when, as he was leaning with his head upon his hands, he heard a light footstep behind him. It was Phyllis, and a most downcast Phyllis at that.

"Oh Ray," she cried, "we are going away this morning. Mama is afraid. I can only stay five

minutes," and then she hid her face in her hands and sobbed. He comforted her ever so gently, with his arms about the little form that shook with the grief.

"It will not be for very long," he said. "You will be back soon and we will have our walks again into the woods and meadows. And we will gather flowers together and sit on the sunny banks and never go away again." With such tender words he soothed her until she dried her eyes and, save for an occasional quick sob, was herself again. She told him then where she was going, just four or five miles into the country, and he made her promise to bring him some pretty wild flowers.

"But about death, Ray," she said. She wished to hear her master again on his favorite subject before she went. "You need not think of that, little sweetheart," he said, "only be sure of this: that you live your life so that when death comes you will be prepared for it, so you will meet it as I shall meet it, willingly and gladly."

He watched her while she went up the street, the sunlight on the bright curls and the little white hand sending back kisses to him. And then he went back into the lonely, gloomy house, and prepared to attend the poor wretches dying without his comfort—his belief in the relief.

Phyllis had now been gone about three weeks and a half. She had had a pleasant time in the green fields, hunting the prettiest flowers to take Ray.

She wandered thro' the meadows hour by hour and repeated his last words. Now, when she could not hear his voice, all the old thoughts gave her pleasure. She remembered the lesson which he had said death taught by the daisies, and so she gathered a great bunch of them for him. The epidemic had been checked in the city and her mother had decided to return.

Again the little figure was seen passing down the street, the sunlight tipping the gold of her hair, the gold-centered daisies which she carried. She passed up the steps of his house and was so busy arranging the great bunch that she stumbled over the step. But she caught herself in time and passed on into the hall. The place was quite dark and the air seemed heavy with the perfume of flowers. She stood a moment in the dark hall and then stepped into the drawing-room. The place seemed a mass of flowers, the walls, the mantel, and in the center a perfect bank of roses.

She stood and looked around a moment. There near the door was the chair where he had sat that last morning and said good-by to her. She patted the chair lovingly with her hand, and then passed to the bank in the middle of the room. She buried her tiny nose in one of the beautiful roses—bride roses, by the way—and smoothed the velvety leaves.

"What a beautiful bank it is," she said to herself. "It is somewhat like the bank Ray and I sat on last spring. I wonder would it matter if I sat on it now?"

It looks so soft and sweet, and I'm tired and lonely, like Ray always is." She pulled a chair to the side of the bank of roses, and mounting it sat on the top of the beautiful creamy flowers. She patted them with her one hand, for she still had his daisies with her, and then she stopped. The bank was not entirely covered with roses; there was a glass at one end. It was partly slipped down, and with her little white fingers she began to pull it further down. The room was very dark and the air so redolent with flowery perfume that it made her feel faint. At this minute she heard from the adjoining room the opening strains :

Abide with me,
Fast falls the evening tide.

and soon she succeeded in getting the glass all the way down. Then she leaned over, and, in the dusky depths below, she saw Raymond Sorrel's face, with every line of pain and sadness gone. In the other room the sweet, boyish voices still sang :

Help of the helpless,
Oh abide with me.

The sad, tender, brown eyes were closed, and an expression of happy peace had replaced the yearning look. The strong hands were clasped over the breast. She stooped and placed her daisies on his hands. And then she reached over and put her soft, white hand against the dark, cold cheek. "Ray! Ray dear!" All the love and longing of the child's soul were in those words. But the eyes that had

always had love for her in their depths remained closed. The strain of beautiful melody floated into the dark, flower-decked room :

Where is Death's sting?
Where grave thy victory?
I triumph still if thou
Abide with me.

Then it came to the poor child losing her first friend and lover; the presence of death. With her warm hand still against the dark, cold, dead cheek, she repeated his last words: "Live so you may meet death as I shall meet it, willingly and gladly."

An Easter King.

A ROMANCE OF THE PACIFIC.

PUBLISHED WITH REMEMBRANCES OF THE WASHINGTON POST'S AMATEUR WRITERS.

I.

WE HERE in cloudy, murky America that day did not know that on that far-off island of the Pacific, men and women were waiting in the moonlight for a king. Above the waiting throng the two tall mountains were garmented in the shadowy light which came flooding down the sides in soft, peaceful whiteness, where ages before the burning, glowing lava had rushed to the sea. The people but half felt the beauty of this scene, for all eyes were fixed on the dark waters of the ocean, where, phantom-like, a ship was fast approaching the moon-bathed shore. That ship was bringing the king to this, his sovereignty, with its fertile soil and Christian subjects. Nearer and nearer came the vessel, until the anxious-eyed throng could see the dark forms moving in the silver light. It came near, so near the sands that the crowd gave a sigh of alarm. Then it stopped suddenly and the dash of ocean waves came clearly through the air. The crowd grew denser and swayed toward the sea until the water touched the feet of the foremost. Figures came over the rail of the vessel and showed black

against the white side. Then the long boat that came from the vessel was the cynosure of every eye. It struck the beach with a thud, and four men jumped quickly from it to the sand. Without a word spoken it backed off and, sailing back through the white light, left the four to face the crowd. The silence that but now had filled the place was broken. Many cries went up in the night air.

“The Father is there! Welcome the Father!”

“And welcome the King!”

“The King!”

And yet those so ready with their welcome did not know which was their King. Three youths had been chosen from the natives eight long years ago to be taken to America and educated, each one as befitted a king of even this tiny island in the southern sea. And now those three youths had returned, and one of them was to be the King—which one the natives were to decide.

Thus every mind was busy as the figures came up, one a kingly figure, but which one?

The Father, whom they had welcomed first and jubilantly, was a young priest when he had christened these three boys and coaxed the natives to send them to that distant college, where they might grow in wisdom as they grew in body. He remembered, as a middle-aged man, he saw the crowd before him now, the throng that had chosen these three boys as the exiles, to leave their homes for a foreign land, but to return as candidates for a crown.

And the three young men returned in thought to that night, and the people, cheering lustily, wondered what was to be the result.

They formed two lines on the sands and the young men marched between them. The first walked with dignified step and lip that curled as he passed. In the scornful curves of that mouth, the natives, quick in their simplicity, read things unfitting a King; they let him pass without a word, and he felt and saw their displeasure. The next was small and slight in frame, with a face sweet and noble, but bearing the unmistakable signs of a broken constitution. Strong in body as animals, they could but disapprove of this weak boy. The feelings were rapidly changing from expectancy to disappointment. Was the King, whom they had expected these eight long years, to be a proud, scornful mocker, or a weak invalid? The Father had played them false; they would have none of these. The murmurs were becoming distinct and vengeful, when down the line the third young man passed. He had paused at the beginning of the line to salute the parents left behind long ago, but now he hastened with lighter steps, after the Father. The true Polynesian countenance was striking in its beauty—the regular features, dark, blood-full complexion, fathomless eyes, now alight with a youthful delight at the home-coming. The young man was dressed in the native costume, in this differing from his companions, and the scarlet cloak but half hid the suppleness of the figure. The mur-

murs ceased, and in their place a loud cheer broke forth: "Long live the King." "Long live the Father." "Long live the King." The youth doffed his cap, the Father, far down the line, gave a sigh of thankfulness, the weak boy smiled radiantly, but the proud mocker curled his lip and strode proudly onward. So, in the white moonlight did the natives choose their King—the King of Davis' Island.

II.

And so the third young man became a king, and, vested with kingly powers, his nature strengthened, losing some part of the gay lightness, but gaining a young gravity that charmed. He was called Basil Leuse, for years ago when the father was called upon to act as sponsor to these three, of which one was to be a king, his hitherto fertile brain could find no plain names suitable except to call each "king." So from the Latin, Greek and Hebrew languages he chose words meaning king—Rex, Basileus and Malach.

In America where surnames are needed, the first and the last added "king," but the afterward successful one was called Basil Leuse. The Hebrew king, in his own weakness, felt fondest affection for the strong manliness of Basil Leuse, and ever in the days of absence from the little island had found the greatest comfort in the society of the patriotic young Polynesian. And now, in the days of honor, he was the prime minister of the king, and, notwithstanding

his weak constitution, he made a prime assistant. There existed no rancor between the two friends on account of the success of the one and the failure of the other, for, besides the unselfish love of the premier for his stronger friend, a selfish reason—the knowledge of the difficulty of ruling in his own weak health—led the young man to rejoice in his friend's elevation.

And so, under the care of these two, the little island was fast entering a stage of unexpected prosperity. The natives had ever been a peaceful race; too peaceful, in fact; but now, under the rule of Basil Leuse, they were awakening to a sense of the power of men. The bank, where the ship had landed the king on that first night, was made into a wharf, which faced a fine harbor with broad gateway to the sea. The water side was being lined with houses, handsomely built of white stone from the island quarries, and modeled after the American plan. A school-house had been built, where, daily, the father dispensed knowledge to the children of the island. The valleys were being cultivated assiduously by the natives, and already the island was being somewhat noticed by trading vessels. Basil Leuse, as king, was cheered and blessed by the people, and the father, as fatherly priest, blessed the people and congratulated himself.

And well might he be congratulated, for, aside from the respect of the people, the love of woman had come into his life and brightened it. During the

year previous to the arrival of the king, the father's sister, a widow, had died, leaving a girl of seventeen to the care of the priest. And he, after burying his sister in America, had brought the girl with him "for a year or two." But Marian Delhart, with her glad, bright ways, covering all her thoughtfulness and kindness, had grown into the father's life as the mountains and the people, and he, had grown into hers, so now there was no reference made to that parting which neither could bear. And since the king had come with his American youth and American knowledge and American polish, a more home-like light had been shed about the island, and she in her simplicity thought that it was a greater regard for the dead volcanoes which had sprung up in her heart. And he?—well, he, who would not let all American culture turn his heart from his Pacific island, embraced in affection for this one girl all he had left in the States and all that he hoped was ever to be in his life.

Such was the situation when an event, which Basil Leuse had dreaded with all his nature, occurred. The water supply of the island gave out. Davis Island had always been deficient in this necessary liquid, but never before had this happened. The water of the ocean had lost sufficient of its saline properties in traveling through the earth for agricultural purposes, but was still too salty to drink. And this being soon discovered, the people were forced to turn to sea water. But the proc-

ess of changing the sea water to fresh was so difficult to the natives that they soon began to despair. Basil Leuse dispatched a ship to America for those things which, from his student days, he knew to be necessary, but meanwhile the despair increased. Basil Leuse himself, after racking every fertile brain in the island, discovered that there could be no aid before the ship returned. Meantime Marian Delhart, with her bright, soft ways, had a charm over the man which dispelled even his deep anxiety, and, knowing this, the king cast himself into her society continually. And soon the maid knew, as well as he, that the attraction was not that for the volcanoes, grand as they were, but for a fellow-creature.

The inhabitants of Easter Island, as their need of water grew greater, felt a hate for the young king, who, in this, his first love, seemed to forget the thousands of people whom God or the father had placed in his care.

One night as the young king sat in a thoughtful silence in his palace that had been erected since his accession, a large delegation of the natives came to him, and with them, in that dangerous place, the background, came the defeated candidate for kingship, Rex. An old man who had held the young king in his arms long years ago, spoke first.

"Basil Leuse," he said, with some fatherly anxiety in his tone, "we have come to you to-night to remonstrate with you. We know you are young ;

many of us, twenty years ago, when you were still an infant, were passing through the adventures that all youth has. But we were not kings, as you are now, and we had no treason mingled with our courting. You need not frown, oh, Basil Leuse, for when you play with the affections of a foreign woman—you, our king, in the time of our greatest distress—does that not seem like treason?"

Basil Leuse had stood beyond the light of the lamp while the old man was speaking. Now he came forward, and, drawing up with true kingly grace, spoke:

"Yes, I am your king, and never before has one of you dared to say 'treason' to me. As it is your time—yes, and mine, too—of great distress, I can forgive you. But let no other word be said of treason in me. Is it treason that I love a woman, though she be not of our race? Have not other countries kings and queens, and can not a foreigner rule with as good a grace as any of you? And yet she is not a foreigner. Does she not love our island as we love it? Is she not as interested in all that happens here as you yourselves? Ay, and is she not suffering what you suffer, and bearing it more peacefully than you? And yet you call this treason—to love her?"

The delegation had listened in silence while the young king defended his love, while his flashing eyes and proud mien foreswore defending. But when, with scorn in his handsome young face, he challenged them, another Polynesian spoke forth:

"Is it not treason to hope to make her queen of

us, of us with daughters of our own, more fit for ruling us? Let her assist us in this time of distress—let her find us water—and we will own her queen.”

“Water! Aye, let her find us water!” the throng cried, and “Water! Water!” came echoing back.

The king strode forth with blazing face. “She shall get you water,” he cried, “Go!” and the people, still murmuring “Water,” went.

III.

With the sun next morning came that great anniversary, Easter, and, notwithstanding their great distress, the honest, religious natives thronged to mass. The little church, with its sweet flower scents and glowing candles, cast a calm over the heavy hearts; when the father in his priestly robes and with his kind, benevolent face, petitioned before the flowery altar for water, each man and woman grew hopeful. Basil Leuse was not seen at church, although far back in the choir gallery, his kingly figure was hidden by the shadows. When the mass was finished and the father was going among the people with his blessings and cheering words, Basil Leuse crept down, and, passing reverently before the altar, slipped into the sacristy. Thence he passed out through the white burial grounds to the little cottage of the priest. As he came near he saw her standing at the green-shaded door, the golden light shining on her head. She came to him with her hat swinging by its long ribbon to her arm.

“The Lord is risen,” she said, and “He is risen, indeed,” he responded, and they stood there hand in hand at the gateway. Then he spoke. “Shall we walk?” he said. And, nodding her bright head, she answered, “Yes.” And so the two through the sunlight walked up the mountain side, and the summit, though far away even in that light, seemed near destination to the young feet. At last Marian turned toward the right, seeking for new sights, and the king followed willingly. They entered a dense grove of trees, with difficulty making way through the heavy undergrowth. But the maiden wandered on, led by some guardian fate, until at last, breaking through the brush, she stood in a wide, open space surrounded on all sides by thick trees and growths that shut it off from the rest of the world. And there, in solitude rearing its magnificent head, stood a huge statue forty feet high and twelve wide. From the stone of the island it had been cut, but the face had been chiseled into beauty with a skill that was marvelous. It was the figure of a man, with a long robe, majestic in his height and in the beauty of face that belonged to the One who had risen that day.

Basil Leuse and Marian Delhart gazed on the grand features with awe and wonder. Many statues, the result of prehistoric labor, had been discovered on the island, the majority in the craters of the dead volcanoes, but none possessed the size nor the beauty of this. The two approached it reverently and ex-

amining saw that even the bare feet and the folds of the gown were perfect. And the likeness to what one imagines the risen Christ to be, became more apparent.

They dared not speak ; it seemed that to break the silence that surrounded and had surrounded for ages this beautiful statue would be sinful. Basil Leuse placed his hand on the white stone ; it was cold as ice and clammy, leaving his hands damp from the touch. He looked at the girl, and she read his eyes.

“Basil,” she cried, almost hoarsely, “do you think——”

“I know,” he said.

In this land where rain had not fallen for days, those drops could not come save from below. Into the king's eyes dawned a hopeful light. The girl covered her face. “I am so glad,” she whispered, and leaned against the statue regardless of the dampness. And as she leaned, there came a sound—a creaking, breaking sound—and she drew hurriedly away. In the side of the statue appeared a long, straight crack. The King hastily, eagerly pressed against it, pressed with all his young strength. The crack widened and spread ; a last press and a piece of the statue, about three feet square, flew in like a door. And standing there hand in hand, the two looked in and saw a wide opening into the earth, filled with the sound, the peaceful, happy, welcome sound, of bubbling water.

IV.

When the people came with loud rejoicings and saw the statue in its magnificence and that well of pure, bright, tasteless water beneath, they fell in their simple joy upon their knees and praised and thanked Him who had risen that day. And to them it all seemed that the figure, glorious in its grand beauty, was far more like Him than the statue that the father had brought from America and placed in the little church down below. The natives accepted the discovery of the spring as an answer to their Easter prayer, but the king, while believing that, sought for historical facts. It was very probable that in those far off days when other men and beliefs ruled the island, this spring had been a sacred one, protected from the irreverent by the secret door in the statue. This had been fastened by some mechanical spring which had lost its power as it grew older. Thus he accounted for the deftly-hidden door, but he could but render thanks unto the ever-caring Deity. The natives called the statue the Risen Christ, and the spring, if so large a body can be called a spring, the Spring of Life. It had come to them in their greatest need and seemed inexhaustibly supplied with the pure water.

And so Marian Delhart had aided the discovery of the spring and the islanders blessed and cheered her with their might and requested Basil Leuse to make her queen. And, as if to reward the faith of the

natives, the ship returned with all the necessities for removing the saline parts from the ocean water.

So now, on an evening brightened by a moon as silver as on the night of the coming of the King, Marian Delhart became queen, crowned and married at the same time, by the father of the island, in the woodland church of the Risen Christ. And by the request of the king and concurrence of the natives, the island itself was rechristened in honor of the Easter Queen, the Easter Spring, the Easter Christ—it was named Easter Island.

A Quiver of Arrows.

USED ON LIFE'S STAGE.

WHEN EVERYBODY who was anybody, went away last summer, we floundered patiently thro' the inexorable house-cleaning, and then departed for the mountains. We went to a charming hotel, with miniature Matterhorns on every side, and a broad, beautiful river winding through the valley at our feet. Mother and I were soon into all the quiet pleasures of the place. We used to walk every morning to the summit of some mountain, and have glorious times in the cool air. A regular party took these constitutionals every day; we dubbed ourselves "The World Wonder Mountain Climbers," and became celebrated as such through the countryside.

An important member of the club was a lady, Mrs. Fordon by name. I saw nothing unusual about her, but the ladies were intensely interested in her. She was a small woman, about forty, I suppose, but still pretty and young looking. She was quite attractive and had fitful humors, but we girls could see nothing in this to arouse such evident curiosity.

At last, it was admitted by the elder members that it was her history that attracted them. They said her life had been a sad one, and every lady in the hotel would adopt a tender soothing tone when speak-

ing to her, with hopes, I believe, of coaxing a confidence. Further than the statement of its pathos, the reserved Mrs. Fordon would not go, so all the ladies could do was to surmise. And surmise they did, believing it to be either lunacy in the family or love.

After conversing with her, I decided that it was the latter. She professed to be very fond of reading, yet sentimental novels satisfied her literary hunger. She delighted in Ella Wheeler Wilcox, and used to quote from "Men, Women and Emotions" continually. You can see from this that I did not admire the class of subjects she selected, but I shall not treat her less kindly on that account.

Well, one morning we walked over to the post-office—we World Wonder Mountain Climbers. The postoffice is combined with a variety store, where everything can be found—from lemon drops, coconut cakes and huge chocolate caramels, to wide-brimmed straw hats and, calicoes and gingham of the most astonishing shades.

Here every member of our party received a letter. Mine was from Dick Steward, saying he was coming up for a week or so. Mrs. Fordon told us the contents of hers, in as cool and easy a manner as possible, but it was confounding to us. She told us that the letter announced the coming of her two daughters. This was the first time she had mentioned them; we had not known that they even existed until that moment.

She said that they had been spending some years in the South, and were now coming to her for the rest of the summer. We girls were astonished, but delighted, for we felt that daughters of such a historic woman would have histories of their own which *we* might ponder over. We inquired anxiously when they were coming, and found that they would arrive in about a week. She seemed to take the news very philosophically—so philosophically in fact, that the ladies felt it necessary to follow her example.

When the week was up and the morning dawned on which the two daughters and Mr. Steward were to arrive, everybody in the hotel flocked to the veranda. The club even postponed the constitutional, so we might be present at the arrival, for new faces were a rarity at the hotel. The train seemed late to us that day, for the ladies were too eager to even discuss the emotions with Mrs. Fordon. They were all prophetically sure that the mysteriously sad history would be explained. I believe they expected to see a horribly deformed creature or an idiotic one, or maybe two of either kind.

Presently, a cloud of dust came up the road, announcing the arrival of the coach. It drew up in front of the steps and Mrs. Fordon, mother and I went down to it. Mr. Steward stepped out first and gallantly assisted two—the two girls to alight.

And then we saw them. They were neither idiotic nor deformed nor even awkward, but sailed to their

mother with dignity but slight affection. They were both pretty, the younger, rosy and dark, the elder white and golden. They kissed their mother with a cool, social little sound, and then together went into the house. Even as I turned to shake hands with Dick Steward, I heard the running fire of comments, as severe and as gentle as women's comments can be. I imagine they dealt with them rather gently because they expected so much from them. Each lady had woven a romantic tale about the slender form of Mrs. Fordon, and each inwardly hoped that the girls would verify it.

Dick received much attention as a newcomer until luncheon time, then he surrendered his place, for the two girls at length appeared. I was nearest the door as Mrs. Fordon came out, so she turned immediately to me.

"Miss Felton," she said, "Let me introduce to you, my daughters, Miss Harding and Miss May Harding."

The secret was out! She had been married twice, and that was the reason of the sadness. I was so amazed that it was with difficulty that I maintained my composure—customary, you know. After they had been introduced to all, I sought them out and sat with them. They said the journey had been rather fatiguing, and that the weather was beautiful and the place lovely. The conversation was not at all original, but I was probably as much to blame as they.

With a discernment really unusual in me, I saw that they had perceived the surprise of the ladies and were rather uncomfortable, so I offered to show them the details of the beauty of the place. They accepted the offer pleasantly, and so with Dick Steward we sauntered around. And immediately they displayed their character.

The elder girl, Celia, proved to be very sweet, but equally shallow. When you sought beneath the surface, it was like finding yourself confronted with an implacable wall, all the more disappointing, because you felt that beyond it, there was nothing. She said the scenery was very pretty, but this sounded so unreal, the admiration was so momentary after the rapt attention awarded by her sister and Mr. Steward. For May Harding was quite different from the other girl, having a deeper nature and deeper thoughts and a greater knowledge of things and the world. The elder Miss Harding has grown up in the world as though outside it, and had learned nothing from whatever she had seen of human nature. The younger girl was decided in actions and opinions, but it was a pleasing decision after the variableness of her sister.

You can see from this description of them that we became very well acquainted—before the week was out we became very good friends. We found that their mother had been married twice and we supposed the first husband was dead. As we noticed the three together, mother and daughters, we could not but

perceive what a queer family they formed: Mrs. Fordon with her affection for the emotions, the two girls—Celia, sillily romantic, May, straightforward and practical.

And yet they had both early fallen into the one general rut. They confided in me one day a great secret, told with their mother's belief in love; they they were both engaged to be married. Of course, I was immediately interested and clamored for descriptions. Celia's affianced proved to be a man twice her age, but she exclaimed enthusiastically about the beauty of his features and the habitual melancholy of his nature. From her description I was sure he was just the man to affect such a girl, a man with something in his life and his heart that appealed to the romantic. May, however, was engaged to a man just twenty-one, and she declared him as practical as herself. They were both very much in love, and I was in the stage to appreciate such conversations.

Well, about two weeks after the girls' arrival, May came to me one morning with a letter. It was written in a strong, manly hand, and said that her affianced, Mr. Herbert, was coming to see her and meet her mother. It was a very straightforward letter and a loving one. May was, of course, delighted, Celia was happier at seeing someone from the North where he was, and Mrs. Fordon seemed anxious to meet the lover.

He arrived the next morning and seemed practi-

cally jubilant at seeing May again. I was standing beside Mrs. Fordon when he was introduced to her and saw the anxious light in his eyes—as though he were hoping he would please her. I think he succeeded for she gave him a very sweet smile and let him wander off into the mountains with May.

It grew monotonous to see them always together, courting, however practical the two persons may be, is not *always* interesting, so we decided to have an entertainment to relieve the atmosphere. A very nice entertainment was decided upon, and one of the numbers was a minuet. May and Mr. Herbert, Celia and Mr. Corrill, Dick Steward and myself and another couple from the hotel, were to dance it. We had a glorious time in preparing it and the rehearsals were most amusing. At one of them, a guest took our portraits; here is the one of May and Mr. Herbert. Isn't it charming? and aren't they nice looking?

Well, the night of the entertainment arrived and we were all in a flutter of excitement. It was an important evening to us three girls; Mr. Steward—he was Mr. to me then—and I were at an interesting stage of our "friendship;" Mr. Herbert, Sr., was coming to consult with Mrs. Fordon whom he had never met, concerning an early marriage; and Celia's lover was coming in person to see her. His name was Harris—I do not think I ever heard his first name, as Celia had a pretty pet name of her own for him.

When the minuet was announced, the stage was darkened until only a faint rosy glow spread around. And then we glided out. They said afterward that it was very beautiful, and I would confess that I believe it if it didn't betray conceit. The men, you know, had on white silk Continental suits, and our dresses, of real old-fashioned silk and laces, were very graceful, dainty and quaint.

May and Mr. Herbert were blissful; and I saw a great light spring into Celia's face when our dance was nearly over. Following the direction of her eyes, I saw a tall man at the further end of the room, who had just arrived, so I understood it.

Well, we were recalled again by perfectly thunderous applause, and again went thro' all the pretty, fantastic steps. Then we hurried back to the dressing room and begged Mrs. Fordon, who was officiating there, to permit us to remain in our gowns. And so, soon eight old-fashioned knights and ladies joined the gay, summer crowd. Mrs. Fordon retired to her private parlor and requested that the girls should bring the gentlemen to her. But those two foolish maidens desired to have the gentlemen alone for a while, so while they promenaded on the veranda, I was dispatched to bear the word "patience" to the mother.

Notwithstanding Mr. Steward, I went willingly, for I was rather anxious to see how Mrs. Fordon received these happenings. She smiled very sweetly at the postponement, and said that she had passed thro' it all herself. It seemed rather pathetic to me that

this woman, still young, still pretty, should be here alone in the brightly lighted room, while downstairs, her daughters had forgotten her in their lovers. And even as I reflected thus, the door was thrown open and a man with a light overcoat on his arm entered.

“Ah, Marie,” he said, “I have been seeking you this last hour; I arrived at the hotel about half-past nine. You must have hidden yourself.” I knew immediately that it was her husband, and when I saw the white, constrained face she turned toward him, I felt that here was the turning point of the sad history. She introduced him and he bowed to me with easy courtesy; then he conversed with his wife, the wife who sat facing him, with a face whose covered horror frightened me. He talked of the weather, of the latest news in the city, but no word of affection passed between them.

Soon, we heard a laugh in the corridor—a high and a low one—and then steps approaching the room. The door was opened and May came in, the dark face tinted with love’s own pink. She seemed amazed at sight of the man there; he made a movement to kiss her brow, but she drew away with but slightly repressed repulsion. Then Mr. Herbert followed, and behind him a man with a face, kind, but deeply wrinkled. Mr. Herbert took the older man by the hand and drew him forward.

“Mrs. Fordon, my father,” he said. And they each gave a little scream—this old-faced man and this pretty woman, and she buried her face in her hands, and gasped.

“Henry Morisell.”

At that moment Celia, in her dainty, old-fashioned gown, slipped into the circle, with a great blindness in her eyes. She did not seem to notice the hidden face.

“Mother, dear,” she said, “let me present Mr. Harris, my—lover.” It was said with a timid, beseeching inflexion, and the woman looked up to see the face—the beautiful, melancholy face of Celia’s lover. And then she retreated to the sofa and sank down beside the man who was her husband. But Mr. Harris turned from the girl beside him, to the wall. The two girls stood there in dismay; Mr. Herbert was amazed. The two daughters went to the woman rocking herself there on the sofa.

“Mother, mother!” said May, in an agonized voice, “what is the matter?”

And the woman, displaying a face white and old from these few moments, said: “The matter! Oh, God!” and, pointing to those two elderly men, “They are my husbands!”

* * * * *

All the sad history came out that night, a stranger one than any of us had dreamed. Two of the ladies watched by her bedside till dawn, and to them she told her tale.

“I wish I were dead,” she moaned; “dead! All the troubles that I have brought to them. To marry four times and have four husbands living! Harris was the first,” she said, “but he used to travel, and leave me alone at home; I was young and I did not

like the life, so I separated from him. He went abroad immediately after, and I did not know that he had returned. I married Henry Morisell just the next year, but he soon grew tired of me and he began to drink. So we two were divorced, and he married Miss Herbert, taking her name, although until now I never discovered that. Then I wandered about until I met Edwin Harding, and I loved him. But after six years he went West to "find a bonanza for the girls," as he said. He remained away a long, long, desolate time, and meanwhile John Fordon came. He was rich, so rich; he coaxed me to separate from Edwin, my children's father, on the ground of desertion. Separate I did, and all the while Edwin, poor Edwin, was working to get money for me. And now they have all come back, for a letter from Edwin came to-day, full of reproaches, reproaches, reproaches! They come now with my little daughter loving the son of one, and my first daughter loving the other—loving my husband. And I, Heaven help me," she cried, "I am in love with a fifth!"

Then she fell back unconscious; the two girls, still in the pretty, old-fashioned gowns, came in to look at her. And May, the pretty, practical, straightforward May, wept—wept and forgave her, probably because she was not entirely cut off from her love. But Celia, the other daughter, her first daughter, her shallow daughter, gazed at her with cold, cruel, unrelenting eyes, and then went away with the man she loved—her mother's husband.

Rica's Eyes.

DEDICATED TO CONTESSINA DE VECCHJ, AS AN EVIDENCE OF INTERNATIONAL
RESPECT AND PERSONAL AFFECTION.

ON THE GREAT isolated rock that overlooked Bellinzona, the far Switzer town, stood the Castello Grande. Many happy hearts had been inclosed in the old days of glory, but now, weary hearts beat dully there behind the gloomy walls. From a palace of grandeur it had descended to an armory and prison, where convicts were sent and forgotten—where visitors seldom came, and seldom left.

The gaolers were slow men, whose blood never stirred, even at sight of the glorious mountains of the Alps; who led quiet lives and reared children to the same ideas that they themselves held. It was never thought strange now that the castle should figure as a frowning fortress, and the children growing up in freedom, gave no thought to the wretches there. The attraction that once existed at the Castello—even the sight of the somberly clad men, who once in twenty-four hours breathed the light of God's day, had become uninteresting.

And they, poor fellows, in their yearning for something new, something strange, missed the bright young faces that had been wont to peep thro' the bars of the gate. There was one man there, who was himself not old, who longed with all the power

of a nature once so strong, for a glimpse of the life apart from his. He had been in the prison, ten, long dreary years—years that had sapped the color from his hair, his cheeks, and had left only his eyes and his memory bright and keen for use.

Every evening in his little, dark cell, his memory did sharp work. He lived again and again that wretched night, when his nature had broken bounds, when with passion, anger and love, he had gone mad and struck *him*, Rica's other lover. He remembered it all, even to the wild delight when the deed was done, then the wilder fear of Rica. He remembered how she had looked when she came to him—to *them*, with her face white with anger and pain and despair—when she faced him with those eyes of hers, beautiful even with that dreadful light. Ah, yes; he had remembered it all these long desolate years—had heard over and over again the words she had spoken over *his* unconscious body—dead, they both thought.

She had not dreamed then, she did not dream now, and might never dream, how much he loved her. She had always said he had loved her for her eyes only, and not for what made up herself. And he had loved her eyes, such beautiful eyes they were, large and deep and hazel and true—as his mother's.

Yet it was all very right that he, who had done that thing, should lose Rica. And as he reflected over that, the whole truth came to him. All the prison life and hardships would have been as nothing, had

Rica been truly his. She was probably married now, to *him*. He found that much of that strong feeling that he had held against *him* was gone—dead as his life was—and all that remained in his soul was his love for Rica. And she would never know all she had been to him, sinner though he was—unless he should escape! Escape!

Years ago he had given up that idea, but now when the children dropped out of his life and there was no one to think of but Rica, hope grew up. He watched. And now with those reawakened eyes, he found the gaolers careless. The prisoners, all older and even more hopeless than himself, had accepted this life as inevitable, and not for years and years had an escape been attempted.

He noticed the fastening of the gate in the court yard and with his old, boyish ingenuity, fancied himself able to overcome that. He busied himself night and day over a scheme of escape. He grew paler and thinner from loss of sleep, but in his eyes were visions of Rica and in his ears the sound of her voice.

Among these meditations, Palm Sunday approached and passed and yet he had decided upon no plan. The evening before Holy Thursday came, and the man was almost hopeless. He was sitting in gloomy thought in his cell that night, when his gaoler came in for the dishes from his dinner. He turned to the man for the sight of a face in the dark room.

“What day is it, Jacques?” he asked in a voice full of despair.

“To-morrow is Holy Thursday,” said the man, brusquely, and with a deep frown. At that moment the prisoner felt that there was hate in his heart for the goaler; he had believed himself too old for such passionate feeling, and it encouraged him when it came. He rose from his chair in the torrent of his feeling and saw there, the door open. He gave a gasp of hope, then—

“Why are you so surly to-night?” he asked, his voice very calm.

“All the others are away at midnight mass,” he answered, scowling, “only the sentinel and I were ordered to stay,” and he made a royal oath.

Then he looked quickly at the prisoner, seeing he had said too much. But it was too late. The other man had sprung to the door and was out in a second; then he had closed the door and the goaler was fastened within by a spring catch.

The man, passing down the corridor, went out of another door, which, in his impatient spleen, the gaoler had left unlocked. The courtyard was almost deserted. The sentinel stood at the farther end, listening to the solemn liturgy that was wafted up from the church below. The man, in a frenzy of excitement, hope and fear, tore open the gate; he did not know how it was done, but the ancient fastening responded to his touch.

He closed the gate after him that the guard might

not sooner discover his escape. Then he fled down the narrow pathway, around by the foot of the great rock. Fear and the delight of liberty winging his feet, he hurried down a road to the river. He had remembered the blue-watered Ticini over which he had passed on his way to his long captivity. In the faint starlight he saw it now, but the deep stream did not tempt him now as it had then. He crossed the river by one of the arched bridges and hurried down the road to Locarno. Chill winds blew him into strength; day came and at length he saw Lake Maggiore shining in the light of the morning sun. He began to feel the length of the journey. Ten years of quiet had not improved his pedestrian powers and he felt this and feared. Perhaps Rica might never know; and he might never see those beautiful eyes again.

With this thought he quickened his lagging steps and walked far into the day. At eventide he reached Intra, far down on the lake. The quiet, peaceful village brought a calm to the man's heart; the little home-like cottages and the sight of those happy, well-to-do free people touched his soul.

He paused at one small cottage, just like the rest, save that in the neat garden, a child was playing, a child with Rica's eyes. He called the child to him, and, touched unconsciously by that tired voice, she came and laid her hand against his knee. Then, seeing the wanness of that strange face, she, child-like, called her mother. In her free, happy life, the

young peasant-mother had pity for the lonely man and took him in. So the escaped convict rested in the little white cottage until daybreak.

Refreshed and supplied with a stock from the peasant's simple larder, he started out again on his journey to Rica. All the day he traveled westward, until he came to Piello, just a day's journey from Mt. Cenis and Rica. Here he rested in peace, for he was beyond the reach of his former captors, and even this one taste of freedom could not give him strength unceasing.

The next morning he started out again, while the day and his spirits were fresh. He felt a strange delight rise in him; he began to see familiar spots and retreats with joy, many adventures of ten long years ago, when he was young and with Rica. He smiled over them now—over all those old-time fancies and the old-time youthful assurance.

Even with the smile, he recognized how prison life had changed him. From the hopeful, passionate boy, whose hand was ever ready, too ready, to protect his own honor and his loved ones, he had changed into the hopeless man, with feelings all dead save that one love of his youth, and buried, leaving him the shroud only, of calm despair; a man who now felt an almost childish delight in the freedom and the nearness of Rica, which before had been worth his life to him.

His thoughts in this old channel reverted to that other man on account of whom he had lost Rica.

He was not dead, for it was he whose influence had sent his attacker to the Castello Grande. Most probably he was married now to the innocent cause of all these years of misery. And thinking of this, the man unwittingly slackened his pace with saddened, hanging head.

Therefore, it was about dark when he reached Mt. Cenis, but still the sight of the dark mountain, looming above him in the dusk, strengthened him. As he made his way up the old familiar path a feeling of desolation held him. A sad, gray-haired man, he was returning to the brilliant beauty he had loved in his youth. Could Rica, with the loveliness and sprightliness that had characterized her, care how he had suffered and thought and loved? Or would she, with her Italian nature so akin to his Switzer character, recognize herself as the angel that had guided him on?

He had advanced far up the mountain, but his strength was fast fading away. It had almost been better to have remained in the Castello and died there, than to return and live here, with Rica married and uncaring. He was bringing back a broken constitution, doubly broken by the exertions he had made to reach her. Pure of soul, as she had always been, how could she bear to look with those beautiful eyes on him, with the memory of that sin? He should not have returned, for he knew that if he saw Rica happy with *him*, the old fiery, passionate nature would burst forth—the nature that now seemed so

dead within him—and he would wish the blow had carried death.

The man was stumbling wearily, drearily, along ; he saw again the white, angry face, with the great beautiful eyes, then he fell face downward. There was a rushing, hurling, deathful sound that drowned her voice—Rica's eyes, then darkness.

* * * * *

The year after the man had been sentenced to the Castello Grande, an Englishman, named Fell, was granted a permit to erect over Mt. Cenis, a railway. And this had been done, wonderful as it had seemed, and trains were running quite regularly now. A train was returning that night from the summit and the lake and the village where Rica had lived.

When the engineer felt the jolt and heard the sickening sound, he brought the train to a standstill. And then they brought the poor, broken, bruised body from beneath the car, and laid it on the green grass. The strangely wan face had already lost a few of the bitter lines ; death's hand is ever coolly calm and soothing. Faint breaths crept through the lips, red now as they had not been in life.

They carried him further up the slope of the mountain to the convent, there where the glorious Easter hymn came flooding out on the night air. They laid him on the soft sod of the courtyard while they called the sisters. And among the others came one, whose gentle step seemed to reach the man so close to the grave. He opened his eyes, the glad

light sprang into them; a warm red tinge came into the dark cheeks.

“Rica!” he cried.

And the sister, the nun, knelt by his side and looked into his eyes with love in her own.

“I have come to you, Rica,” he said, with something of his old, boyish intensity in his voice, “to tell you—how—I—loved you! How I—had had—you—with me—all these years—in prison. I—can not say—it—now—Rica, because it hurts me—so, but—you will know it—now—Rica?” The light was fading from his eyes, the deep despair was darkening them again.

“You are—not married—Rica? Did he—the wretch—leave you? Why are—you here?”

In answer to that heart-aching voice, the woman spoke now for the first time, her voice trinkling with tears.

“Why am I here? Because I love you!”

There flashed across the man's face—the haggard, noble, Southern face—a radiant light, because he saw those ten long, hopeless, desolate years made glorious by her smile, her love.

“You—do not—frown—on me, Rica; those eyes—those beautiful eyes—that I have loved—those beautiful eyes—Rica——”

He died.



AS AN APPENDIX to this series of short stories, a combination has been added, a combination that will prove interesting to those who desire to gain business advantages, and bits of philosophy in the same teaspoonful of sugar.

To explain in the fairy-tale style: Once upon a time, a group of our immortals were gathered near the gates of the Elysian fields, and were peeping through the bars and describing the scenes they saw, in words that the sight of the earth recalled to their lips. By chance, a mischievous sprite, titled Breeze, overheard their conversation, and slipping his tiny self through the bars, bore it down to the earth and into the writer's ears. And she has condensed this conversation into the following pages, with this stipulation: that those, hereafter, entering the Elysian fields, shall not recount the trick of the little sprite and gain for him the wrath of gods.



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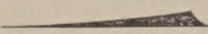
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